



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **For Immediate Release**

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## **For Additional Information**

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### **Cave Volunteers Selected for National BLM Award**

CARLSBAD – The U.S. Bureau of Land Management has selected a New Mexico-based group to receive one of nine national volunteer awards, according to Mary Jo Rugwell BLM-Carlsbad acting field office manager.

Members of the Southwest Region (SWR), National Speleological Society have won a “Making a Difference” volunteer award for helping the BLM educate public lands visitors about caves as unique natural and recreational resources, according to the BLM citation.

SWR members have contributed expertise to cave inventory and mapping, photo monitoring, recreational development and visitor use analysis, according to Rugwell. “They’ve contributed tens of thousands of hours during the past 40 years, since 1962 when the BLM and the SWR teamed to begin long-term cave management activities.”

The SWR has surveyed more than 200 caves on BLM lands in New Mexico. “Many of these newly identified caves are in developing oil and gas fields. Knowledge of cave locations has enabled the BLM to protect groundwater and fragile cave resources,” Rugwell said.

Steve and Kathy Peerman of Las Cruces, representing the SWR, received the award from BLM Director Kathleen Clarke at a ceremony May 30 in Washington, D.C.

The BLM initiated the “Making a Difference” national awards in 1995. Recipients are chosen for their contributions to management and conservation of the public lands and resources, not for length of service or number of hours contributed.

The BLM recruits between 17,000 and 20,000 volunteers each year to perform a variety of jobs, from campground host to archaeologist to educator. BLM volunteers donate about a 700,000 hours a year, the equivalent of more than 400 work years. The work conservatively is valued at more than \$11 million, according to the BLM.

In many instances, BLM volunteers are the agency's first point of public contact. Campgrounds and other recreational sites in some remote areas would be closed were it not for volunteer help. Volunteers are playing an increasingly important role for the BLM as growing populations in the West have placed increased demands on the public lands.

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More information about the BLM volunteer program is available at:  
*<http://www.blm.gov/volunteer>*